

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A system for communicating between a plurality of viewers of a broadcast presentation, each of said plurality of viewers having a multi-media display device displaying a single window layered display and a computer controlling said multi-media display device and interfacing each of said plurality of viewers over a computer network, said system comprising:

a single-window layered display including:

a broadcast layer, for displaying said broadcast presentation in a background layer of said layered display; and

at least one overlay displayed in at least a second layer of said layered display on top of said broadcast layer on said single-window, layered display, said at least one overlay having a substantially transparent background and allowing said broadcast presentation in said broadcast layer to be viewed through said at least one overlay, said at least one overlay including a plurality of user-selectable multi-media tools allowing a user to manipulate said at least one overlay to add user-prepared enhancements to said broadcast presentation; and

a communications controller, for transmitting said user-prepared enhancements to said plurality of viewers of said broadcast presentation over said computer network.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein said computer network

comprises a local area network (LAN).

3. The system of claim 1, wherein said computer network comprises a wide area network (WAN).

4. The system of claim 3, wherein said WAN comprises the Internet.

5. The system of claim 1, wherein said at least one overlay layer is implemented in software running on each said viewer computer, said software comprising a dynamic display controller generating said at least one overlay layer having said substantially transparent background, said software further comprising said communications controller transmitting said user-prepared enhancements to said plurality of viewers over said computer network.

6. The system of claim 4, wherein said at least one overlay is implemented in an Internet web server accessible by said plurality of viewers over said Internet, each said viewer computer including:

a web browser accessing said web server and retrieving said at least one overlay;

a dynamic display controller merging said at least one overlay with said broadcast presentation on said single-window

layered display; and

a communications controller for transmitting at least one user-prepared enhancement to said plurality of viewers of said broadcast presentation.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein said plurality of user-selectable multi-media tools comprises at least one drawing tool, allowing a user to reference at least one object appearing in said broadcast presentation.

8. The system of claim 7, wherein said at least one drawing tool comprises a speech bubble.

9. The system of claim 7, wherein said at least one drawing tool comprises a thought bubble.

10. The system of claim 7, wherein said at least one drawing tool comprises a text box.

11. The system of claim 1, wherein said plurality of user-selectable multi-media tools comprises a graphic insertion tool, responsive to viewer input, to insert a graphic into said at least one overlay.

12. The system of claim 1, wherein said plurality of user-

selectable multi-media tools comprises a user-selectable delivery icon to trigger delivery of at least one user-prepared enhancement to said plurality of viewers over said computer network.

13. The system of claim 1, wherein said broadcast presentation comprises a television broadcast.

14. The system of claim 1, wherein said broadcast presentation comprises a pre-recorded multi-media presentation.

15. The system of claim 1, wherein said plurality of user-selectable multi-media tools comprises an audio editor and wherein at least one of said plurality of user computers includes an audio output device to receive, store and output audio signals associated with at least one overlay.

16. The system of claim 1, wherein said plurality of multi-media tools comprises a broadcast mute tool to dampen said broadcast presentation on each said viewer display device allowing said at least one overlay to be emphasized.

17. The system of claim 16, wherein said broadcast mute tool comprises a video mute tool.

18. The system of claim 16, wherein said broadcast mute tool comprises an audio mute tool.

19. A method of generating and providing user-prepared enhancements to a plurality of viewers of a broadcast presentation, each viewer having a display device and a computer controlling said display device and interfacing said viewer to said plurality of viewers over a computer network, said method comprising the acts of:

displaying said broadcast presentation on each said user display device in a background layer;

providing at least one overlay layer on each said user display device, said at least one overlay layer including a substantially transparent background and including a plurality of user-selectable multi-media tools;

monitoring user interaction with said multi-media tools and storing at least one user-prepared enhancement input using said tools;

transmitting said at least one user-prepared enhancement to said plurality of viewers of said broadcast presentation over said computer network; and

displaying said at least one user-prepared enhancement on said at least one overlay layer on each said viewer display device.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein said act of providing at least one overlay layer comprises storing said at least one overlay layer in memory on each said viewer computer.

21. The method of claim 19, wherein said act of providing at least one overlay layer comprises storing said at least one overlay layer on a server accessible by each said viewer computer over said computer network, accessing said at least one overlay layer over said computer network and displaying said at least one overlay layer on each said viewer display.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein said act of providing at least one overlay layer comprises providing a user-prepared enhancement overlay layer and a multi-media tools overlay layer having substantially transparent backgrounds over said background layer on each viewer display.

23. The method of claim 19, further comprising the act of highlighting said user-prepared enhancements by muting said broadcast presentation displayed in said background layer.

24. The method of claim 23, wherein said act of muting said background layer comprises lowering a brightness setting of said broadcast signal being displayed in said background layer.

25. The method of claim 23, wherein said act of muting said background layer comprises lowering a contrast setting of said broadcast signal being displayed in said background layer.

26. The method of claim 19, further comprising the act of highlighting said user-prepared enhancements by muting and audio signal associated with said broadcast presentation.

27. The method of claim 19, wherein said act of transmitting said user-prepared enhancements comprises selecting a user-selectable delivery icon provided as a tool on said at least one overlay layer displayed on said viewer display device.

28. A system for providing an enhanced broadcast experience for at least one viewer of a broadcast presentation, said at least one viewer having a display device displaying a single window layered display and a computer controlling said display device, said system comprising:

a single-window layered display including:

a broadcast layer, for displaying said broadcast presentation in a background layer of said layered display; and

at least one overlay displayed in at least a second layer of said layered display on top of said broadcast layer on said single-window, layered display, said at least one overlay having a substantially transparent background and allowing said broadcast presentation in said broadcast layer to be viewed through said at least one overlay; and

a plurality of displayed user-selectable, multi-media tools, each of said multi-media tools allowing a user to manipulate at least one of said at least one overlay and said broadcast layer, to add user-prepared enhancements to said overlay layer to be viewed in association with said broadcast presentation and/or to control at least one effect in said broadcast layer.